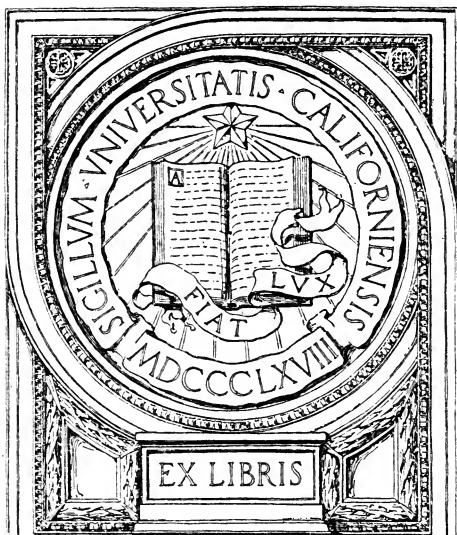


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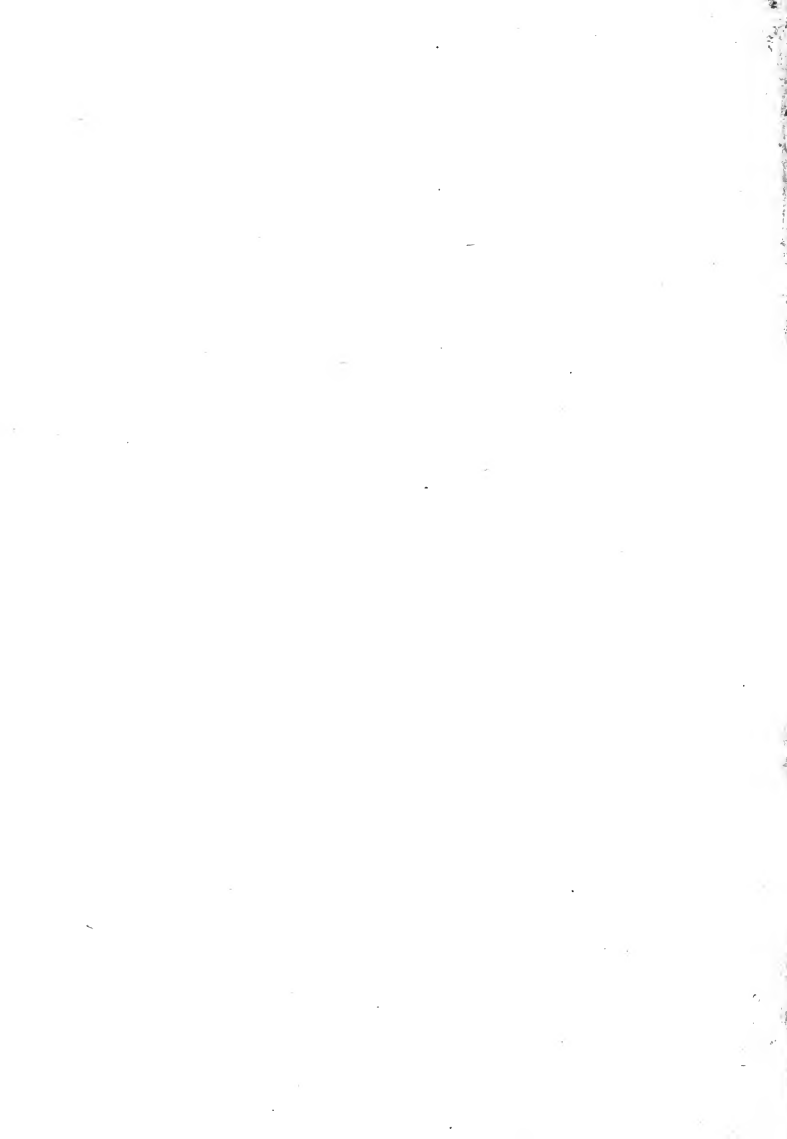


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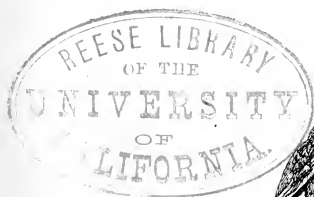
# SOME NEWSPAPER TENDENCIES

## AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE EDITORIAL ASSOCIATIONS OF  
NEW-YORK AND OHIO

BY

WHITELAW REID



NEW-YORK  
HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY

1879

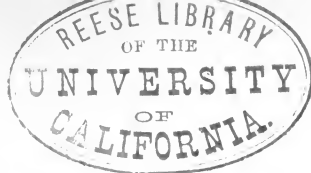
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## SOME NEWSPAPER TENDENCIES.

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### AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE EDITORIAL ASSOCIATIONS  
OF NEW-YORK AND OHIO.

I am to speak to you of our common work  
—of its needs, its tendencies, its possibilities.

It may well happen that this may lead to a mention of some faults of which we are all guilty, and of some standards by which we might all profitably try ourselves. No doubt it would be easy for any critic that cared, to show that I do not live up to these standards myself. I do not pretend to. No man's work is so good as his ideal; must he, therefore, have no ideal toward which to work? No man can wholly control his circumstances; must he, therefore, wholly surrender to them? Growth is but a succession of partial failures. You, whose purpose is the highest, you must perforce fail the most conspicuously. Yet, all

the same, your arrow, even though it miss its aim, carries further if aimed at the stars.

Every now and then some Magnus Apollo of an earlier day returns to our profession.

We all give him most respectful salutation ; felicitate ourselves on the great gain we shall have from his experience, judgment, skill ; and wait. Regularly, decisively, and at the outset, he fails.

The reason of this monotonous disappointment has come to be recognized. The business of making a newspaper is in a state of constant growth and change. You might almost say that it is revolutionized once every ten years. The veteran returns to find the old methods useless, the old weapons out of date, the old plans of action out of relation to the present arrangement of the forces. Nor is this to be thought in the least unnatural. Abolish the old forms of procedure ; adopt an entirely new code, as our Albany pests are perpetually proposing ; and Charles O'Connor, returning to the profession of which he was so long an ornament and glory, and attempt-

ing his own office business, might break down in a police court, under the onset of a Tombs shyster.

No doubt there is progress in the other professions, too ; at least we helpless victims of the lawyer and the doctor hope so. But these absolute revolutions have, in this century, been the distinctive mark of our own.

The cylinder press made one. Before that the circulation of a daily newspaper was imperatively limited by the number of pulls one pair of arms could give a Washington press within the hour or two which shut in the life, for publication purposes, of any day's news. Four hundred was large, a thousand enormous, beyond fifteen hundred an impossibility. The railroads made another revolution. They doubled, trebled, quadrupled the area of circulation.

The fast printing press made another. It is not too much to say that one man, still going about the streets of New-York, modest, genial, busy on new notions, gave a new birth to the journalism not merely of his own coun-

try but of the world. When Richard M. Hoe showed how types could be placed on a revolving cylinder instead of a flat bed he did as much for the profession that now rules the world as the inventor of gun-powder did for the one that ruled it last. From that moment came the possibility of addressing millions, at the instant of their readiest attention, from a single desk, within a single hour, on the events of the hour.

And now came another revolution as startling as any. The conduct of newspapers ceased to be the work of journeymen printers, of propagandists, needy politicians, starveling lawyers, or adventurers. Its new developments compelled the use of large capital, and thus the modern metropolitan daily journal became a great business enterprise, as legitimate as a railroad or a line of steamships, and as rigidly demanding the best business management.

Thus stimulated, its growth again outran its facilities. No printing-press ever devised could print in the required time as many

newspapers as there were eager buyers. The discovery of a way to stereotype the whole paper in half an hour, and thus put as many presses as you needed at work on the same paper at the same time, solved that difficulty, and the business underwent another change, amounting to revolution. Then came the enormous extension of telegraph lines and ocean cables. The old-fashioned letter-writer was almost abolished. The Washington correspondence came by telegraph. The account of a great battle fought yesterday east of Paris was read in detail this morning in New-York. The journalist, at one leap, took the whole world for his province every morning.

With each of these revolutions the sphere of the daily newspaper has broadened. It has commanded wider and more varied ability. It has been able to draft talent from any quarter, to command the best business sagacity, unlimited capital, the widest enterprise. As the result of all this we see to-day—

Daily papers that sell you every morning, for three or four pennies, matter equalling the

contents of a thick book, often procured at a cost tenfold, a hundred-fold what the book's contents cost;—

Papers that add to this mass of information as many, sometimes twice or three times as many, pages of advertisements, on every conceivable subject, classified and indexed;—

Papers that give you yesterday's news, from every quarter of the habitable globe, and on every conceivable subject, the downfall of an Empire, the conclusions of a European conference, the result of a horse-race, the verdict of a Presbytery, the secret proceedings of a hermetically sealed caucus, the robbing of Patrick O'Donovan's till, the game of baseball some college boys have played, what Edison thinks he is going to discover, what the Leadville enthusiasts say they have discovered, and a veto message from the President—an infinite variety of things worthy and worthless;—

And, finally, daily papers that give you all this with such multiplicity of detail, and in such masses that, unless from morn till



dewy eve you give your whole time to it, you cannot read them through.

To that complexion have these successive and rapid revolutions in journalism brought us. What is to be the next great change? Will the growth in the size of our papers continue, so as to make room for increasing advertisements and yet wider and fuller news? Or shall we presently find the greatest newspapers too big already and too crowded with news to admit any advertisements at all? Shall we have cheaper papers? Shall we increase the quantity or the variety of news we print in anything like the ratio of the last decade?

Certainly there must be great changes in the matter of advertising. I doubt if, in most cases, the volume is to be much increased, and in some it is pretty sure to be diminished.- The business of issuing supplemental sheets to carry off the surplus of advertising, is self-limited, and in some cases it is already carried on at a loss. You issue a

paper of a certain grade at, let us say, 4 cents, and you so adjust your scale of expenditure that your receipts on the circulation of so many copies will about balance it, leaving the advertisements to furnish the profit. But you fill the paper with news, and crowd these advertisements into an extra sheet. Here now enters another element in your problem. Your advertisements can no longer be counted as profit, because out of them must first be paid the cost for the extra paper on which they are printed. Your circulation is necessarily large, or you could not depend on it to pay the expenses of procuring the news and making the paper. But the larger it is, the larger becomes the drain for the extra paper on which you now print your advertisements. With a circulation of 50,000, the cost of this paper might be taken from the gross receipts for advertising and still leave you a handsome margin for profits. Double the circulation, and you have doubled the cost of your extra paper for printing the same number of adver-

tisements ; yet you sell the two sheets at the same 4 cents for which you once sold the one. This may leave the margin on the wrong side.

A few actual figures may make it plainer. You undertake to furnish an eight-page newspaper for 4 cents. As the circulation increases, and the business management learns to take advantage of it, the advertisements flow in and crowd out the news. Your readers would resent this, and your rivals would have you at a disadvantage. Either you must raise the price of the advertising so as to get the same revenue from a smaller amount of it, and exclude the rest, or you must carry it off in an extra sheet for which you will receive no extra pay, and the entire cost of which must be deducted [from the profit you rightfully expect on your advertisements. With the present system of fast printing-presses, you can make this sheet one-quarter, one-half or the whole size of the regular issue, but one of these three it must be. Suppose you content yourself with a sup-

plement one-fourth the size of the regular issue. This gives you two pages, and, at a low but safe estimate, 1,000 paying lines of advertising to the page. Now, say you print and give away with the regular issue 100,000 of this supplemental sheet. Your white paper for it costs you \$250. Your agate composition for it costs you \$50 more. You have made an outlay of \$300 in order to print 2,000 lines of advertising. How much must you get for that advertising to repay you the actual outlay? A moment's figuring brings you the approximate price of fifteen cents per line. Recollect, this involves no profit. It does not even meet the expenses, for I have counted the bare cost of the white paper, the composition and the proof-reading. There are a thousand and one incidentals, the receiving of the advertisements, the transmission, collections, waste paper, extra postage, extra press-work, extra cost in mailing, etc., etc. Does it take much study to show that these advertisements

must bring a good price, or the publication of them must be continued for purely philanthropic purposes, and at a loss? Yet there are newspapers which print them for nothing, and there are others, of great circulation, too, which print many of them at 5 cents a line. Years ago the younger Bennett said to me, "The growth of this advertising troubles me. Whole columns of it I print now at a loss, and I would gladly throw part of it out, if it were not that some of you fellows would pick it up."

Of course, one point must not be lost sight of. There is a certain element of news in some of this advertising, and that newspaper is more welcome to some of its readers which has a moderate amount and variety of it. But one question must be settled before deciding to publish it at a loss, or to publish it for nothing. Is this *the most* interesting news with which this space can be filled? Will this cause more readers to buy the paper than anything else we could get to put in its place? ✓

The upshot of it all seems to be that, in the long run, cheap advertising must seek cheap mediums. The paper of the largest circulation cannot afford to cultivate it. The advertisers most likely to afford appearing in the great newspapers of the future will be those appealing to large classes, and able, therefore, to pay for the widest publicity. The chambermaid that wants a place at \$15 a month cannot long afford to ask 100,000 readers for it. She can better go to an employment agency. The man who has a horse to sell will not talk to 100,000 readers about its points; he will go to a sales-stable. The man who wants a cook will not advertise for her any more than he will for his Winter's supply of coal.

In London, there is a curious paper, as big as *The London Times*, devoted solely to the publication of cheap advertisements about individual wants, matters of sale or barter. One man has a shot-gun and wants to trade it for Blackstone's Commentaries. Another has a guitar and would like to get for

it a set of shirt studs ; a third wants to trade a ring for old clothes. A myriad of petty things make their appearance here at an insignificant cost, but the paper is published solely as an adjunct to a great sales and barter bureau. Its circulation is trifling, the cost of manufacture little beyond the bare cost of composition, and the profits are derived from the commissions on the sales and trades which the bureau cultivates. This is an entirely legitimate business and a convenient one ; but it is not the business of journalism. No great newspaper could afford to bother with it itself ; far less could it afford to bother its readers with it. They already complain of being forced to grope through too many pages to find what they want. The experiment of giving them still more would only result in driving them to the smaller and handier papers.

If, then, the greatest newspapers of the future will not be filled with masses of small and comparatively cheap advertising, as to a

considerable extent they are now, will they go to the other extreme? The daring idea has sometimes been advanced that the coming newspaper would publish no advertisements at all. It is not impossible, though just now quite improbable. The old theory of selling the paper to the purchaser for the bare cost of the white sheet on which it is printed, leaving the advertisements to pay the expenses of making it a newspaper, has been pretty well exploded. The colossal expenses of the modern daily are no longer risked upon an income so uncertain, and at the best so fluctuating. It happens, too, by a curious law which is often found working in business affairs, that the less you need advertisements the more you are likely to get them—while the more you depend upon them as an absolute necessity for the continuance of your publication the less likely they are to come.

It seems chimerical to expect printing paper to fall to a still lower price, and at its present price and with their present circulations



none of the great newspapers could exclude advertisements. There is no sufficient reason to believe that the insertion of attractive news and miscellany in the place the advertisements now occupy would draw in enough more readers to make the profit on the increased circulation compensate for the loss on the advertising.

But, preposterous as it now seems, I look for the day when printing paper will sell far below its present price ; and I rest this faith on the simple proposition that a manufactured article, the process of manufacturing which is easy and comparatively cheap, cannot long continue to be sold at six cents per pound, when the bulk of the raw material entering into it grows in the forest, on every hill-side, and can be bought at \$2 a cord. The disproportion between the cost of the raw material and the cost of the manufactured article is too great to be permanently maintained. It is true enough that paper-makers have only the narrowest margin of profit now ; but better processes for making wood-

pulp and improved machinery for converting it into paper must surely come. So simple a manufacture will not continue forever adding a thousand per cent to the cost of the raw material it uses. When the happy day of really cheap paper comes, the greatest newspapers may fairly consider the problem of excluding everything from their columns but that which is of universal rather than of partially private and partially public interest.

*Are we likely soon to have cheaper newspapers?* You have all been confronted, of late years, by an occasional growl like this: "Everybody has to take lower prices nowadays. Wages are down, the cost of living is down, everything else has come down to what it was before the war; why don't you put down the price of your paper?" But the newspapers have not come down to the prices before the war, and I make bold to say that the sagacious ones will not. *The Philadelphia Ledger* before the war was sold at one cent. I venture to predict that if

it is ever again sold at that price it will be many years hence. The New-York quarto dailies used to be furnished at two cents. Who thinks of seeing papers like those of to-day sold at two cents again ?

A short answer to the inquiring growler may be readily given : " We will come down to ante-war prices whenever you are ready to accept an ante-war newspaper."

What that was few really remember. Looking over the files of the journal with which I am most familiar I have found that on the busiest days, and under the crowning excitements that preceded the rebellion, it was in the habit of receiving an average of between one and two columns of news by telegraph from all quarters, exclusive only of the reports of Congressional proceedings. News from Europe all came by steamer. News from all the considerable cities of our own continent came mainly by post, when it came at all. Clippings from the exchanges were the chief source of supply. Even a great National Nominating

Convention called for only something like two columns of telegraphing, and this was so spread out by profuse paragraphs and other cheap typographical tricks as to occupy double the space we should give it now. To-day your foreign news comes exclusively by the cable; your domestic news too comes exclusively by telegraph. A news letter from Chicago or St. Louis is almost unheard of, for the simple reason that the news has been told by telegraph before the letter could start. For the two columns of dispatches from all quarters in 1859, we now have page after page printed, and sometimes as much more remorselessly thrown into the waste basket—sent by telegraph and paid for, but not used, merely because the columns will not contain it.

I have mentioned the transmission of news by telegraph instead of the mails as one item in the increased cost of making the metropolitan daily newspaper of to-day. A dozen more might be enumerated. On no single one does any great news-

paper dare to undertake material retrenchment. To do so would be to abandon the field to its rivals. The public have been educated up to what they now receive, and would no more be put off with the newspaper of 1860 than they would tolerate again the slow mails, or the antiquated railroad accommodations of 1860.

But figures are after all more convincing than mere description. I have selected as the year affording the fairest data for a comparison with the present times, the year before the election which precipitated the Civil War; and, going back again to the records of the metropolitan newspaper with which I am most familiar, have extracted a few entries which tell the whole story.

In 1859 the total outlay for news, editing, type-setting, printing and publishing, including the accounts of the editorial department, composing room, press room, publisher's department, correspondence and telegraph, was \$130,198. On the 13th of January, 1879, the outlay for the past year in the same de-

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partments was reported at \$377,510. Yet this is, with many of the accounts, subdivided, so that a part of the outlay is charged under other heads; with all the economies of the period since the panic, in full force; with expenses at the lowest point in nearly every department they have touched for several years; with the cost of telegraphing from Washington lower than it has ever been before, and out of sight of any price any telegraph company has ever named—a cost in fact of less than two mills per word as against the old rate of from one and a half cents per word upward; with composition almost one-third lower than under the old spoliation system of the Printers' Union, and with salaries in every department made in some measure to correspond with the tendencies of the times.

Let us take another year for a fairer comparison. Against the \$11,679 telegraphic expenses of 1859 set the \$51,728 88 in 1874; against the composing-room bills in 1859, amounting to \$42,256, set those for 1874,

amounting to \$125,883 28. And finally, contrast the total expenses of the editorial department, including correspondence, in 1859, \$43,125, with the sum of \$188,829 45 spent for the same accounts in 1874.

Trifling as the expenditures of those early days seem to us, we come now and then upon signs of alarm already inspired in the minds of the sagacious metropolitan publishers at the evident tendency to make a better paper than the people paid for, to give more every morning than the money's worth, and thus to keep steadily approaching the time when the amount spent in making the paper would more than overbalance all that the subscribers and advertisers were willing to give for it. Thus, in 1864 I find a curious passage in a publisher's report, complaining of the extravagance in the outlay for editorial work, correspondence, composition, special telegraphing and supplements. The feeling would seem to have been general. At any rate there had been a comparison of figures between different offices, and the prudent publisher of THE TRIBUNE

was worried because in the five principal items of expense which he enumerated, THE TRIBUNE had spent in the previous year \$28,116 more than *The Times*. Here are the contrasted items which he reported :

	<i>Tribune.</i>	<i>Times.</i>
Editors and correspondence, not war..	\$49,228	\$45,660
War correspondence.....	25,706	14,040
Compositors.....	49,547	45,741
Special telegraphing.....	12,623	7,817
Supplements, TRIBUNE 21, <i>Times</i> 11..	9,000	4,730

The expenses we have been considering have been taken from ordinary years. Let us now see what they are in extraordinary times. When a great war is raging in European countries with which we have close relations, through trade, travel and immigration, the New-York reader demands as prompt and complete, if not as detailed, news as does the London reader, and a great journal cannot afford to disappoint its constituency by failing to meet this demand. See now what it costs, remembering that in 1859 tele-



graphic expenses were thought enormous when they had reached an annual total of \$11,679. In the Franco-Prussian war, THE TRIBUNE's telegraphic bill, largely payable in gold, was \$85,303 51. Its additional bill for correspondence, also mostly payable in gold, was \$43,263 46. Other journals quite possibly spent more; those that did not suffered by it.

Now take another mode of estimating what it costs to try to meet the demand for the kind of newspaper to which readers have been educated. From a table of comparisons covering a series of years I select a few sample figures.

You have seen that in 1859 the entire editorial expenses, including all correspondence, amounted to \$43,125. In 1866 the editorial expenses alone amounted to \$81,775, and the correspondence to \$49,300 more. In 1867 the editorial alone had swollen to \$84,778; two years later to \$96,182; two years later to \$107,525; two years later to \$133,854; two years later still to \$148,234. Meanwhile the correspondence had

run up in the same fashion, until in one year it reached \$70,038.

Not only was this news procured and handled in more costly ways, but there was a vast mass more of it. Note how the cost of putting it in type ran up. In 1859 you have seen that the entire expenses of the composing-room were \$42,256. Now take a few later years. In 1866 they amounted to \$86,609; in 1867 to \$91,008; in 1868 to \$94,388; in 1869 to \$100,769; in 1870 to \$105,492; in 1871 to \$107,827; in 1872 to \$113,518; in 1873 to \$117,180; in 1874 to \$125,883; and in 1875 to \$154,788.

Something has been said of the enormous increase in editorial expenses, but a few figures of individual salaries will make it clearer. From an old salary-book containing the weekly payments from 1848 to 1859, I extract from the first page some items that have now a curious sound. The first entry is Mr. Sinclair, bookkeeper, \$15; the next Mr. Strebeigh, assistant bookkeeper, \$10. Then follow Mr. Dana, assistant editor, \$14; Mr.

Taylor, ditto, \$12 ; Mr. Cleveland, ditto, \$10 ; Mr. Snow, money reporter, \$12 ; Mr. Davies, in the courts, \$4 ; Mr. Towndrow, police reports, \$7 ; Mr. Augustus Maverick, proof-reader, \$6 ; Mr. Gibson, ship news and importations, \$14 ; Mr. March, Washington correspondent, \$20 ; Mr. Robinson, ditto, \$15. Now skip to the last page of this same book containing the payments for the week ending on the 31st of December, 1859. Very largely the same men made the paper. It had grown, as the record on the same page shows, from the weekly use of 168<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> reams for the daily to the use of 494 reams. Below these items stood the personal list, doubled or trebled in length, but with the same leading names. Reading down it now, we pick out Mr. Sinclair, bookkeeper, \$48 ; Mr. Strebeigh, assistant ditto, \$30 ; Mr. Dana, assistant editor, \$48 ; Mr. Ripley, ditto, \$25 ; Mr. Gay, ditto, \$20 ; Mr. Towndrow, \$14 ; Mr. Snow, money reporter, \$30 ; Mr. Gibson, ship news and importations, \$28 ; the Washington

correspondents, \$57 50; the Count Gurowski, \$20. But the latter was not a weekly payment, and was unusually high. Many weeks the good Count, who was only employed "by the piece," got nothing, and the entries opposite his name were mostly for sums of \$5 or \$10. On the books, a little further back, George William Curtis figures as City Editor at \$20 per week, and Henry J. Raymond, as second on the paper, rose gradually from \$8 to \$20. Richard Hildreth wrote apparently "by the piece," and his monthly payments ranged from one to two hundred dollars,—sometimes more. In 1855, William Henry Fry had risen to \$25 per week; and the next year James S. Pike was paid "for the whole Winter's work at Washington," the gross sum of \$202 50. Bayard Taylor was credited \$5 apiece for his California letters, but on his return Mr. Greeley moved and carried an advance to \$10, on the ground that "they had made a hit." Mr. Greeley's own name appears regularly on the lists of those days at

\$50 per week. He afterwards had it cut down to \$40; and there was never a subsequent advance which he did not resist. Once indeed there is an entry to the effect that "Mr. Greeley protested at some length against the advance in his salary, and gave formal notice that he did not intend to earn any more than he was now receiving." For ten or a dozen years past, it has been my duty to fix the salaries on this same book. I have found plenty of gentlemen who might truthfully enough have given this last notice, but not another who made the preliminary protest!

Does the most rigid economist expect that the newspapers will or can return to these "prices before the war?"

Or to pass from the mere question of salaries, does he wish the pages of markets, foreign and domestic, to be sent once more by post, the foreign news to come by steamer, the pages of telegraphic dispatches, special and Associated Press, to be replaced by clippings from the exchanges and news-letters

sent by mail ? Does he wish the actual amount of matter given him each morning reduced over one-half ; and does he wish the age of four-fifths of it increased from twenty-four hours to three weeks, before he is permitted to see it ?

But, we may be told, all this is unnecessary and deceptive. Of course your expenses have increased, but so, proportionately have your receipts. Well, to that the balance-sheet affords an exceedingly argumentative answer. On a business of half a million in 1859, as a 2-cent paper, THE TRIBUNE made a net profit of \$86,000. At the beginning of 1879 we found that on a business of nearly three-quarters of a million as a 4-cent paper, it had made \$85,588. The fluctuations in the interval had been at least sufficient to show that in a matter of such magnitude it was not wise to hunt for any more risks than we already had. In times of great excitement, Presidential years, and the like, the volume of business of course runs up. I have myself been able to report a net profit

of \$155,000 on a business of \$974,000, and on the smaller business of \$941,000 a profit of \$171,049; and I have also had to report, on a business of \$925,465, a net loss of \$96,690. Or, to rid the statement of figures, we have made \$85,000 as a 2-cent paper; have spent a half more and made only the same sum as a 4-cent paper. In the interval, we have sometimes spent twice as much to make only twice as much, while at other times, on a like expenditure, we lost as much.

One item of increased expense, and a cruel one, has not yet been noted. We must now pay the postage for our readers. In a single year this has amounted to \$31,698 71, every dollar of which is a dead loss.

We pay more for special work on our Weekly than we ever did in the old times; and its circulation to-day is larger than I find it stated by the publisher (and I never knew a publisher understate those things) in his report at the annual meeting the year before I became connected with the paper. And yet, with this greater cost and greater circulation, we real-

ize less than two-thirds the receipts of those days for weekly subscriptions, and have to pay the postage on them besides. That is a sample of what comes from putting the price down, for it is on their weekly issues alone that the New-York journals have chosen to reduce their rates not only to, but below, the prices charged before the war. The experiment, whether satisfactory or not, seems sufficient.

But it is time to end this cumulative array of facts and figures. I judge that they have left us all substantially of one mind. On the whole we are not likely to gratify our growler. We shall not return to the prices before the War, because we dare not return to the narrow scale of expenditure and the meagre fare before the War, while to take the old price and give the present quality is merely to plunge into bankruptcy at a gallop. The cheapest thing sold to-day in America in proportion to the cost of its manufacture is the daily newspaper. The average American is a shrewd buyer, but he



does not long insist on buying an article for less than the cost of making it, for he knows that, in the long run, that means one of two things;—that he is dealing either with a fool whom he is ruining, or with a knave who is cheating him.

We have seen that the next great revolution in journalism is not likely to be a return to the cheap prices of the period before the war. We have seen that it is not likely to be in the direction of increased supplements for advertising; and that it is not likely to be in the direction of rejecting all advertising. What is it to be? Shall the *variety* of news now furnished by the daily newspapers be still further developed, so that, in this respect, the contrast between the journal of the next decade and that of the present shall be as great as between the journal of to-day and that of twenty years ago?

Yes and no. The variety can scarcely increase because newspapers already present as many different topics of human interest as the

average mind cares to concern itself with in the day's leisure of the average reader. There can scarcely be more topics treated. But they will, no doubt, be different topics. It is possible to interest large masses of people in subjects of more importance than many of those which now fill the closely printed columns of so many pages. The range can hardly be much greater, but it may be higher, and higher without being less interesting or less vivacious.

If we are to have no greater variety, shall we not have greater *quantity*? As growing capital and ever-broadening resources permit, shall we not have every morning two volumes for our four cents where we have now only one? where ten years ago we had the half of one? where twenty years ago we had the half of that? Shall we not give important political debates a verbatim report, where we now print only four or five columns? Shall we not double or treble the space to be accorded the details of a great accident?

Can a great public meeting be permitted to pass without a record of every syllable uttered in it? Shall we not have, in a word, brief summaries of the news for those who are hurried, supplemented by the most voluminous details for those who have special interest and ample leisure; and shall we not habitually contemplate the issue of sixteen pages to carry all this matter, where more than eight now is the exception rather than the rule?

I know very well that it is in this direction the thoughts of many of our wisest and most progressive journalists have long turned. But nothing seems clearer to me than the certainty that the great journals of the future will not make their chief progress in this direction. I do not believe that the daily newspaper of 1890 will give many more pages than that of 1880. Bookmaking is not journalism. Even magazine making is not journalism. The business of a daily newspaper is to print the news of the day, in such compass that the average

reader may fairly expect to master it during the day, without interfering with his regular business. When it passes beyond these limits it ceases to be a newspaper, and it ceases to command the wide support which is essential to its success. A feeling of annoyance arises in the mind of a reader who has put into his hands, in the morning, more matter than he can possibly find time to read during the day. He does not want to skip any of it, because he feels that if he does so he may be missing something he ought to get. He cannot possibly read it, and, at last, in a feeling of irritation, he abandons the paper, buys a smaller one in its stead, skims that, and assumes that if it was properly edited he has missed nothing of real importance. He does not wish great masses of undigested news thrust upon him, in bulk, that he may take out what he wants. He insists that his editor shall do this for him; shall select the salient points and present them within reasonable compass. It would make no difference, if you offered him the undigested mass at the same price

with the compact summary. He will pay just as much for half the matter if put in manageable shape. The great revolution of the future in newspapers is not, therefore, to be in doubling their size, in doubling the quantity of matter they give, or in doubling the multitude of subjects they already treat.

But, as we have seen, the history of journalism, for fifty years, has been a rapid succession of revolutions, and no man knows as well as the hard-working editor that perfection has not yet been evolved. Other changes, as marked, are certainly impending. What is the next?

It was a pleasant conceit of Henry Watter-son's that, if Shakespeare were living now, he would be an editor. The fancy might have fallen better upon a contemporary of Shakespeare's—that greatest, wisest, meanest of mankind, who anticipated the modern newspaper, in taking all knowledge to be his province. But newspapers are many and perpetual. Shakespeares and Bacons come

only once in the centuries. Yet of this we may be sure: The field for advantages through enterprise in the mere getting of news is about exhausted. The great newspapers can now all command substantially the same facilities. Generally speaking, the news that one gets another can get if it wishes. Recurring, then, to Watterson's conceit, it seems safe to say that in the next great stage of journalism the enterprise that now exhausts itself on costly cable dispatches will go to men who can make a great news feature valuable rather from the story it tells than from the money spent in carrying it to you; who will buy for you a costly thing rather than challenge your admiration merely for the money spent in the costly transportation of a thing of less moment. If it must send a Stanley to Africa—and we may well hope that feats so brilliant can be repeated—it will send also a Macaulay to tell his story for him.

Why should the busy man read the history of yesterday at a greater disadvantage than the history of a hundred years ago? Yet that of

a hundred years ago has been most carefully collated, sifted, winnowed, relieved of surplusage, arranged in proper perspective. You are not forced to read the official documents, to burrow among the dry reports, to study with minute and painstaking care the *disjecta membra*. You are not loaded with facts that are useless, particulars that give no form or color to the picture. All this waste is removed. Thousands of pages are searched to give you one, but on that one is all you need to know. A moderately industrious man might spend his lifetime reading the authorities on which Motley constructed the History of the Dutch Republic, yet who—speaking of intelligent people in the mass, not of individual investigators—who cares for the authorities? Who wants anything but Motley? The greatest of recent narrative successes has been Green's "Short History of the English People." Why shall not the most enterprising journal of the next decade be that which shall still employ colossal capital to gather all the news, and then crown and fructify its expenditure by hav-

ing a staff of Greens and Froudes to tell it?

Are a busy people entitled to fewer labor-saving and time-saving appliances about the affairs that most vitally concern them—the affairs of their own day and home—than about those of past centuries? Why should not the impeachment of Andrew Johnson, for instance, have been as well told for us as the impeachment of Warren Hastings? A thousand want to know the story of yesterday, where one cares for that of a hundred years ago. Shall this one command the labor, the scholarship, the genius of the world, while the thousands must toil for themselves among the confused heaps, and winnow a bushel for every grain they get?

I do not mean that the news of to-day must be dwarfed into the space it would receive in the histories of a hundred years hence. It must, of course, be treated with the fulness which the present, or, if you will, the fleeting interest in it demands. But the eclectic principle is precisely the same. The reader of to-



day is entitled to have the story of the day told for him as skilfully as if it were the story of a hundred years ago ; as attractively, in proportion to his interest in it as briefly, with as little waste and as rigid an exclusion of everything that does not add to the vividness and fidelity of the picture.

*The Saturday Review* called Macaulay the father of picturesque reporters. It is in getting such reporters that the ultimate success of the wisest and most munificent newspaper enterprise must yet display itself. Nor do I mean that it is only reporting on a grand scale that is to be thus ennobled—reporting a great battle, a revolution, a pageant that fixes the eye of the world. The genius that enriched the dramatic story of the death of Charles the Second, or the Peace of Ryswick, never showed itself to greater advantage than in that famous third chapter, wherein by a thousand subtle touches and the use of a myriad trifling incidents, like those that now lie under every reporter's eye, there was reproduced a picture of a past age more

minute, more comprehensive, more vivid and, we may even say, more interesting, than any newspaper has given us of our own.

It will be the highest achievement of the most enterprising journalism to make, day by day, for the morning reader such a picture of his own city, of his own country—such a picture for him of the world, indeed, of the day before.

The elements of the picture will be arranged, too, precisely in the order I have named. In the foreground will be his own city; the middle distance will be filled by his country; beyond that, in the smaller proportion to which its relative importance in his eye and for his purposes, entitles it, will be the rest of the world. But, if the foreground is to be the city, that will require the greatest care, the most elaborate work, and certainly not the lowest order of ability. The City Department may then cease perhaps to be the place where the raw beginners wreak their will, and become the point at which the journalistic graduates will

be expected to display their best powers and most thorough training.

This then I conceive to be the next great revolution in journalism. We shall not have cheaper newspapers. They are the cheapest thing sold now, considering the cost of making them. We shall not have continually growing supplement upon supplement of advertising. Individual wants will seek mediums more suitable. Only general wants will need the wider publicity of great journals, and these will be kept, by the increasing cost, within manageable compass. We shall not have more news. The world is ransacked for it now. Earth, sea and air carry it to us from every capital, from every people, from every continent and from every island. We shall not have bigger newspapers; they are bigger now than a busy people can read. We shall have better newspapers; the story better told; better brains employed in the telling; briefer papers; papers dealing with the more important of current matters in such style and with such fascination

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that they will command the widest interest. There will be more care and ability in selecting, out of the myriad of things you might tell, the things that the better people want to be told, or ought to be told. There will be greater skill in putting these things before them in the most convenient and attractive shape. Judgment in selecting the news; genius in telling it—that is the goal for the highest journalistic effort of the future. In making a newspaper, the heaviest item of expense used to be the white paper. Now it is the news. By and by, let us hope, it will be the brains.

What shall be the relations of this new journal of the future toward parties? I may claim to have been one of the apostles of independent journalism, but the zeal of the new converts has quite left me among the old fogies. It never occurred to me that in refusing to obey blindly every behest of a party it was necessary to keep entirely aloof from party—to shut off one's self from the sole agency through which, among a free people,

lasting political results can be attained. A Government like ours without parties is impossible. Substantial reforms can only be reached through the action of parties. The true statesman and the really influential editor are those who are able to control and guide parties, not those who waste their strength in merely thrusting aside and breaking up the only tools with which their work can be done. There is an old question as to whether a newspaper controls public opinion or public opinion controls the newspaper. This at least is true: that editor best succeeds who best interprets the prevailing and the *better* tendencies of public opinion, and who, whatever his personal views concerning it, does not get himself too far out of relations to it. He will understand that a party is not an end, but a means; will use it, if it lead to his end,—will use some other if that serve better, but will never commit the folly of attempting to reach the end without the means. He may not blindly follow a party; in undertaking to lead it he may get ahead of it, or even against

it; but he will never make the mistake of undervaluing a party, or attempting to get on permanently and produce lasting results without one. Far less will he conceive that his journalistic integrity can only be maintained by refusing to believe good of his own party save upon demonstrative evidence; while for the sake of "fairness," he refuses to believe evil of his opponents, save on evidence of the same sort. What his precise relation to a party is to be, must be determined by his own character, the character of the party, and the circumstances affecting both; but some relation is inevitable, unless he would be impotent. Of all the puerile follies that have masqueraded before High Heaven in the guise of Reform, the most childish has been the idea that the editor could vindicate his independence only by sitting on the fence and throwing stones with impartial vigor alike at friend and foe.

Granting, then, that all great newspapers which aim to accomplish any considerable re-

sults, or exert any considerable influence upon the organized public opinion of their time, will come to be classed as generally acting with or in advance of one or another great party, is there not still a wide field upon which the whole press, irrespective of party affiliations or tendencies, should unite? With some minor disagreements as to methods, may we not substantially work all together, on at least these three pressing necessities of the time:—

1. A constant, systematic supervision of local government, in all things affecting taxes, and the increase of local debt. There is no need, before this audience or any intelligent audience, to enlarge upon the crushing evils of the municipal extravagance which for the last fifteen years has run riot over the whole continent. We have been accustomed to talk with bated breath of the enormous size and stifling weight of our National debt. Yet to manage the National debt is child's play compared with the task of placing on any solvent basis, and within manage-

able compass, the municipal obligations of the country. Said one of the wisest financiers of the West, "If I lived in New-York I should feel bound to devote a considerable part of every day in my own self-defence, in co-operation with other capitalists, in an attempt to keep the city government within bounds, and to keep down taxes." He has since learned that he might, to advantage, have been at work for years at the same task in his own city. It is a policy on which all newspapers might fairly unite. It is at least one to which the best efforts of every editor who wishes well to the city which sustains him should, without cant, honestly and clear-sightedly, be directed.

2. Equally hearty should be the union of effort toward an examination of all charities. The growth of this interest is something enormous. The abuses connected with it are equally startling, and the mischievous effects are only second to the evils wrought upon the whole community by municipal extravagance.

3. It does not seem to me quite a truism,



as some may regard it, nor yet quite utopian, as others surely will, to declare that the press ought to join heartily, in right brotherly accord, no matter what the party differences, in waging war on abuses affecting the public morals. Does anybody suppose that, if we did, we should see on our statute books laws against vice which nobody enforces and nobody expects to see enforced? How long would policy shops thrive against such a union? How long would Excise Commissioners defy the decency of the community by licensing peanut stands as "hotels," in order that they might sell liquor in defiance of law?

We might well wish, but with less hope, for a similar agreement upon the great problem of the treatment of criminal news. None of us have to deal with a more perplexing question, and as yet the men of good-will in the profession have reached no common ground about it. Meantime, those who value immediate pecuniary success above any other consideration, have found the criminal news

a real gold mine, and explore and exploit it accordingly.

A great newspaper must make money. Money-making indeed may not be the sole object; may, perhaps, not be the chief object, since it is a profession, and not a mere trade, which editors conduct. But whether for influence or durable success, a sound commercial basis is indispensable to a great daily newspaper. Prosperity carries weight; solvency gives a sense of security. The paper which supports itself respectably can better expect to have its opinions regarded by others. It must, therefore, rest for its chief support upon the honest sale of wares the public want. Whenever it does not, it becomes a mere journal of propagandism, and it lacks influence precisely in proportion as it lives by passing the hat.

Young editors are likely to grow up in an atmosphere of opposition to the counting-room. As they become older they cease to despise the base of their supplies, and will be

ready to give some careful consideration to certain counting-room points :—

1. There can be but one head to a newspaper, and that head, in the nature of things, must be its Editor. The control cannot with safety reside in the counting-room. In younger days I was disposed to depreciate the publisher. Long since I learned the folly of that, but I insist, as strongly now as ever, that the place for final decision must be the Editor's chair. No newspaper can have the highest respect whose Editor does not peremptorily say when occasion requires, "I will not insert that advertisement at any cost. I am not willing to lay it before my readers." "I will criticise that abuse, no matter what advertisements it may drive away from us." And again, "I will not put that advertisement in that place or in that type no matter what they are willing to pay for it." Wherever there is a conflict between the counting-room and the editorial-room on these or a hundred similar and larger points,

there is always weakness and loss of public respect, no matter which side prevails. All successful newspaper conduct points to the necessity of an absolute autocracy, with the autocrat in the Editor's chair.

2. One golden rule should be kept before every occupant of the counting-room, "This is a one-price establishment." There is no other fair way for advertisers; there is no other self-respecting way for a newspaper. If you sell a certain part of your space at all, sell it under the same conditions to all alike. There is no special dispensation for newspapers which permits them to commit commercial sins and escape the commercial penalty. If you do a "Cheap John" business, you must take a "Cheap John" standing. If you want a business as solid as that of A. T. Stewart, you must abide by the commercial maxims that made his success. The moment one advertising agent is able to get a ten-line advertisement into your columns under any particular classification cheaper than another one can, or cheaper than

any individual customer can (the recognized commission excepted), that moment your business has ceased to be an honest commercial business, and degenerated into dicker. There can be no safer rule for a publisher than to dismiss any employé who, for any consideration, takes an advertisement from any quarter for less than the honest rate the paper professes to charge for it, or who charges anybody else a penny more than that rate. All this sounds like a truism, and yet we shall be nearer the golden age when more newspapers adopt a policy at once so simple, so straightforward and so remunerative.

3. Sell your wares for what they are. Don't surrender to the vulgar folly that you must make advertisers believe that you have an incredible circulation, or even that you have the largest circulation. The value of a circulation is often comparative, anyway; one paper with a list of but 10,000 may be worth as much as another which prints 100,000. The public is finding out the

humbug about big circulations, and sooner or later it goes where it gets its money's worth. *The Nation* announces that it prints only 7,500 copies, all told, yet it gets 15 cents a line for its advertising, has plenty of it, and gives the money's worth every time. There is but one reason of the least weight against publishing a daily statement of circulation. The public have been so demoralized by the grotesque ideas of numbers, not merely as to newspapers but in a hundred other matters, with which every editor is familiar, that ordinary figures have largely lost their significance. You all know how a meeting which completely packs a hall with seats for 500 is always spoken of as a gathering of thousands; how a man who is known to have a few thousand dollars in each of two or three ventures presently becomes, in the current talk, worth a hundred thousand, while from that to being a millionaire who swindles the tax collector in his returns is the shortest sort of a step. Not until the administrator comes to look up

the assets is the delusion discovered, and then the dear public goes through the same old amazement over and over again. Just such mistakes exist perpetually in the popular fancy in regard to the circulations of favorite newspapers, until there is scarcely one in the country which can frankly state exactly what it prints, handsome as the showing might be, without disappointing some of its champions, who, having lost the meaning of figures, would think it certainly entitled to double as much. But the policy of preposterous brag on circulation has ceased to pay. The other members of the profession know, and the public will learn, that there is some sort of proportion between means and ends, that the range of circulation and the mechanical facilities for producing it bear some relation to the real figures, and should to the figures given. In my cotton-planting days a genial, hearty rebel neighbor, General Yorke, undertook to take the conceit out of his Yankee friend. "How are you getting along cotton-picking?" said he. "O,

fairly well." "How much are you getting out?" "About a bale a day," was the practical and unsophisticated answer, "O, indeed," said the General, "that is doing very well for a Yankee; very well." "And how are you getting on?" returned the Northerner. "O, I am picking pretty lively now; I am getting out about eight bales a day." Rushing home in hot haste, I called up the "driver" of the picking-gang, and exclaimed, "Jasper, General Yorke says he is getting out eight bales a day. Now we are getting out only one, though we have more cotton here than he has. You must bring your people down to their work, and not let the cotton go to waste." Jasper scratched his head awhile, and said, "Did you say Massa Yorke say he gittin' out eight bales a day?" "Yes." "Well, Massa Yorke a mighty good man. But did he *say* he gittin' out eight bales a day?" "Yes, I tell you, that's just what he said." "Well," continued the puzzled negro scratching his head more vigorously, "Massa



Yorke's a berry good man. If he *say* he git eight bales a day, he git 'em; but dis I know fo' sho': he haul 'em all in at one load, on one fo'-mule wagon." The case was disposed of; and the similar brag of the newspaper publisher who issues 50,000 copies a day and prints them on one four-cylinder press between half-past 4 and 6 in the morning, admits of as ready and complete elucidation.

4. Sell your own wares; don't fool away time trying to run down your neighbor's. What difference does it make what his circulation is? Probably you don't know much about it anyway; but you do know about your own. Put a fair price on space in that, and give your whole mind to selling it. If your space is worth the price you ask, you can get all the advertising you want, whenever business is prosperous enough to warrant it, or advertisers are wise enough to know how to make business. Arnold & Constable sell their goods by offering at a fair price what the public want, and forcing the public to know it;—not by standing around criticis-

ing the offers of A. T. Stewart & Co. and Lord & Taylor. An old rule (French, I think, in its origin,) used to fix the value of the ordinary advertising in a daily newspaper going among the better classes,—the classes likely to buy and with taste enough to want good things—at 1 cent per line per thousand copies of actual circulation. It was a fair rule. There are plenty of papers that charge more and earn it. But on the whole it will be a good thing for the daily papers having their largest circulation among the best people when they are able to enforce that rate. The essential thing is to have *some* rate, fixed with reference to the actual value of the circulation, and to adhere honestly to it with all alike.

5. Keep the advertising in the advertising columns. I realize that this is not the golden age, and that we cannot expect impossibilities. I do not know of five considerable newspapers in the United States rigidly adhering to-day to this rule ; I doubt if there is one that has never, under any temptation,

departed from it. But we can all see that honest dealing with our readers, and honest dealing with our advertisers alike tend in this direction. It may be said, plausibly enough, that there is a wide class of subjects in which the public has a certain interest, while private parties have a greater interest;—that there is, therefore, a certain legitimate excuse for publishing matter about them as news, and also a certain legitimate excuse for taking pay for it as advertising. But this opens too many doubtful questions, and gives the cash-drawer too great a leverage on the editor's judgment, as to the real degree of public interest in the news. The safe way, the true way, the way to which we are ultimately coming, not soon, perhaps, but surely, is to put whatever is to be paid for squarely and honestly into columns that are recognized as paid for; to select what is to be printed as news solely with reference to the largest interest of the widest number; and then, if such selection happens to further private interest as well, to take the pay for that

in the high esteem with which those interested will come to regard a newspaper so judicious in its selections.

6. Have we not nearly reached the limit of public patience in the matter of type? May we not fairly insist soon on a reform which shall make all type readable, none of it so small as to be trying to ordinary eyes; and none of it so large and grotesque as to be offensive to ordinary taste?

7. Shall we not soon recognize the fact that the fast printing-presses, demanded by the needs of the great newspapers, are not adapted to the printing engravings? Can we not persuade advertisers to abandon the effort to make these presses do what they were never intended to do? If double prices for cuts will not persuade them out of it, if blotches where they look for pictures will not, then will it not soon be time to try stones instead of grass, and to drive the cuts out of your advertising orchards at any cost?

But these are mere business reforms. There



are those who insist that the thing really needed is what the old Scotch divines used to call "root and branch work"—that the whole man is sick, the whole heart faint. The elder times, they say, were better than these; the whole character of the Press is steadily deteriorating.

Well, we have faults enough. And yet the elder times were not better than these. There was never a time when the Press resisted greater temptations, or more resolutely maintained a level above its surroundings. The thing always forgotten by the closet critic of the newspapers is that they must be measurably what their audiences make them—what their constituencies call for and sustain. The newspaper cannot uniformly resist the popular sentiment any more than the stream can flow above its fountain. To say that the newspapers are getting worse is to say that the people are getting worse. That doctrine our superfine moralists have croaked ever since we had an existence as a people; but whenever the crisis came

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we have always found that, beneath the surface froth, the currents of National life flowed pure and strong as ever. The evil tendencies of the Press in our day are to be seen plainly enough; they have been seen in all days, since the first newspaper was made. It even works more evil now than it ever wrought before, because its influence is more widespread; but it also works more good, and its habitual attitude is one of effort toward the best its audience will tolerate. There is not a newspaper to-day in New-York, faulty as they all are, that is not better than its audience. There is not an Editor in New-York who does not know the fortune that awaits the man there who is willing to make a daily paper as disreputable and vile as a hundred and fifty thousand readers would be willing to buy. It is the newspaper opportunity of the time; —the only great opportunity that has come since the concentration of capital and mechanical facilities gave the monopoly of the present field to the existing journals.

Several of these might take it ; the Editor of every one of them knows he is making a better paper than his constituency would like, and that he might add a half to his circulation by making it worse ; every one of them knows that a less scrupulous rival may come to do what he refuses. It is with an ill grace that theoretical reformers reproach these men for lowering the newspaper standard, and making journalism a curse instead of a blessing.

But there are plenty of things we ought to reform. First among these I reckon the general tendency, even with our soberest and maturest journals, to the faults of youth. In the nature of things, this tendency will be constant, for young men do the most of your reporting and a good deal of your editing, and always must. The rank and file can no more be made up of gray-beards in a newspaper than in an army in the field. Now youth, and particularly youth intrusted with power, is hasty, impetuous, given to rash ways. It is sure to be hot tem-

pered and apt to be acrid. It naturally overstates the case. It is always aggressive, and is in danger of being uncharitable. In the pride of its superior wisdom it is often overcritical; and it often mistakes a sneer for an argument. It miscalculates its resources. It mistakes the work it has in hand; it sometimes undervalues opponents, and again it sometimes trains its heaviest artillery on mosquitoes. Just such are the faults which a candid observer must find more or less developed in a majority of our newspapers. The wise Editor will reckon upon them as constant forces, with which he must always deal, against which he must be on perpetual guard.

Nor will he mistake the public judgment, if he assume it to be ill pleased with much of this youthful effervescence. Our people like well enough to see a hearty, knock-down blow given; but they hate a perpetual nagging. A daily diet of snarl and sneer is not to their taste. They like to have their paper positive and frank;



they like to feel that for a good cause and at the right time it can make a hard fight; but they prefer that its natural attitude should be kindly (critical enough it is sure to be anyway), and that its prevailing tone should be one of good humor. They don't want to rise from its perusal, every morning, with a bad taste in their mouths. The Editor who commands their respect and persuades their judgment must keep his temper, must keep out of petty personal controversies, must be seen to have higher motives for attack than spite, and higher motives for praise than mutual admiration. In a word, the spirit that habitually controls the columns must be clearly recognizable as one of justice, and good-will.

In that spirit we might escape the present tendency to run in ruts, both with our praise and our blame;—so that, no matter what a man does, you can pretty safely predict at once what a good many papers are going to say about it. If he is a man they are in the habit of praising, it takes little less than

arson or highway robbery, demonstrably proved, to force them to hint a fault. If he is a man they generally blame, he is promptly and as a matter of course assumed to be guilty, however wanton or unlikely the charge, unless he can instantly prove himself innocent. Nor will any moderate array of proof suffice. He must make a case absolutely impregnable, with the presumptions all held rigidly against him. Nay, even if his innocence be demonstrated by the exclusion of every possibility of guilt, it will still be grudgingly remarked that, while this explanation seems plausible, it is a very bad ~~one~~ scape anyway, for such a man to be getting mixed up in! Through this unfortunate tendency, black-mailers and all manner of personal enemies find the press their most serviceable ally. Let them but start a malignant story against a prominent man, and the whole hostile Press may be counted on to espouse it for them, push it, and carry relentlessly forward the work of persecution. Here is the open secret of the enormous spread in this

country of calumny and personal abuse. Only get the Press out of these ruts of praise and blame, and the half of it is annihilated—strangled before it is born.

*Is the power of the Press declining?* Every little while some discontented clergyman or extinct politician declares it is. Quite recently they have given us very solemn discourses about it. Newspapers are more read, they admit, but less heeded. With the air of discoverers they tell us of the great things done by the journals of the past generation, and triumphantly exclaim, "But who minds now what a newspaper says?" There were giants in those days; only pigmies walk the earth to-day. In the earlier times the great newspaper stood for a great force; now it only stands for a great noise. It has become selfish, it wants to make money, it is on a commercial basis now, it actually supports itself—how can such a Press wield the old influence?

I wish to speak with due respect ; but really this sort of talk—and we hear a good deal of it, from unsuccessful quarters—seems to me the twaddle of mushy sentimentalists. Far wiser and manlier was the tone taken by Lord Macaulay, in opening his great history :—“ Those who compare the age on which their lot has fallen with a golden age which exists only in their imagination, may talk of degeneracy and decay ; but no man who is correctly informed as to the past will be disposed to take a morose or desponding view of the present.”

It is easy to marshal the great names of the past, and idle to try to match them from among the living. We count no man great, anyway, till he is dead. But great men do not necessarily make the greatest newspapers. As well might you challenge *The London Times*, in the zenith of its influence, say in 1855, to prove itself the equal of the old *Publick Advertiser*, of the century before, and crush it with the taunt, “ Where have you a man the equal of Junius ?” As well twit our news-

papers of the sea-board to-day with their inferiority to the old *Pennsylvania Gazette*, because among them all is to be found no Benjamin Franklin. Most true it is that the foremost editorial writer of our time has had and is to have no successor. Horace Greeley stood alone, without a peer and without a rival;—not perhaps the ideal editor, but, fairly judged, the ablest master of controversial English and the most successful popular educator the journalism of the English-speaking world has yet developed. I remember how through half his career the men he had angered were always saying *his* power had declined.

It is not true that the ability of the Press is declining. The papers of the country are better written now than they ever were before. They are better edited. Their average courtesy is greater; their average morality is purer; their average tendency higher. They better hit the wants of great, miscellaneous communities, and so they have more readers in proportion to population.

Their power may be more diffused ; but it is unmistakably greater. There has been no more remarkable phenomenon in the history of the profession than the rapid growth of the country press, and its increase in ability, in resources, in self-respect and in influence. There are half a dozen towns in the interior of New-York which now have better newspapers, with larger income and more influence, than those of the metropolis itself a third or perhaps even a quarter of a century ago.

Let the croakers take any of these towns, or any considerable town in the country, and compare the character and the influence of its press with that of a generation ago, or of the period just before the war. Take Rochester, or Utica, or Troy. Take the leading papers of the New-York State Association, and compare their circulation, their standing, their actual control of State affairs, with what they were in 1860. Or take my own old home, of which I may speak the more readily, since I think I know it well. We are very quick at singling out the foibles of its leading

editors. Even the Cincinnatians themselves are ready, now and then, in a spiteful mood, to long for the good old days of "Charley" Hammond, and the other half-forgotten worthies of a half-barbarous period. Yet I undertake to say that from the year when the first-comers established themselves in Colonel Israel Ludlow's village around the fort and Indian trading post opposite the mouth of the Licking, down to this year of grace 1879, there has never been a year when the Press of Cincinnati was so ably written or so full of news, was so much read or so much followed as it is to-day;—never a year when it had so much to do with shaping the policy of Ohio, and of the Ohio Valley;—never a year when its influence counted for so much in the Nation;—never a year when so much power was concentrated there in so few hands as rests to-day in those of Murat Halstead, Richard Smith and John McLean. If you dispute it, name the time, the papers, the men!

No! The power of the Newspaper is

not declining. Never before was it so great. Never before did it offer such a career. But it is power accompanied by the usual conditions,—greatest when most self-respecting and least self-seeking.

There is more good, young blood tending to this than to any of the other professions. There is more movement in it than in bar, or pulpit, or whatever other so-called learned profession you will;—more growth, a larger opportunity, a greater Future. We are getting the best.

These young men will leave us far behind. They will achieve a usefulness and command a power to which we cannot aspire. Very crude and narrow will seem our worthiest work to the able Editors of a quarter or a half century hence;—very splendid will be the structure they erect. We shall not rear the columns or carve the capitals for that stately temple. Let us at least aspire, with honest purpose and on a wise plan, to lay aright its foundations.



## APPENDIX.

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The foregoing address was delivered before the New-York Editorial Association at Rochester on the 17th of June, 1879. Substantially the same address was delivered before the Ohio Editorial Association two days later at Cincinnati—where it was introduced as follows :

First of all, my best thanks to you for remembering—for three years in succession—my birthright as an Ohio editor. It is something I could never forget, but you might have done so very easily. We fancy, those of us who were contemporaries then, that we are yet tolerably young, but in our secret hearts it does flatter every one of us now to be still spoken of sometimes as “the Young Editor.” It is twenty-one years this Autumn since, with boyish pride, I first saw my name printed at the head of the editorial columns in my old paper at Xenia, and holding up the sheet again and again, puzzled over the important question whether or not it would look better in some other type. How little any of us realized that the types we were using then would have something to do with the way our names should look now !

Well, those that are left of us, of the country editors of Ohio of that day, have at least served our apprenticeship ; for good or ill, somehow or another, we have attained our majority.

I remember a smallish, solid, prosperous looking exchange of those days, which edited the county printing with pious care, as well it might, for, though *The Bucyrus Journal* Editor was then known only as plain D. R. Locke, ex-"jour" printer, and; a red-hot Republican, he was soon to burst upon us as the Rev. Petroleum V. Nasby. Then, as now, *The Ashtabula Sentinel* was in the hands of a Howells, but the young son of the Editor had gone down to Columbus, and was trying to see whether there was enough practical stuff in him to make a leader-writer for *The State Journal*, at a salary of \$12 a week. Quite fair work he did, but he was dreadfully given to very misty German novels, and to reading his long translations at extremely unreasonable hours to sleepy-headed friends whom he might inveigle to his rooms. His name was Wm. D. Howells, and he now edits *The Atlantic Monthly*. His chief there had no alarming weakness then in the way of German sentimentalism; but he was ready to wander away from his unfinished editorial at any hour, day or night, for the chance of finding a German band in a concert-saloon, and that tendency at least has survived the changes, the added powers and the wider influence *The Press* and *The Gazette* and twenty years have wrought upon Mr. Sam R. Reed. In those days *The State Journal* was thought to be rather putting on airs, for it not only had two editors (Reed and Howells), but it indulged the luxury of a publisher, who "ran" two papers, both daily, and he published them so well that presently he became head of the Washington branch of the great house that placed the war loans, and "Governor" Henry D. Cooke, of the District of Columbia.

There was a lively "local" then on *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*. He had been a "tramping jour," and scattered over Ohio from the river to the lakes were sundry boarding-houses in towns where struggling papers had given up the ghost, whence this "jour" had moved on, unpaid himself, and with an ever-swelling array of unpaid board bills behind him. At last, in printer phrase, he "struck it fat," and back he came on his old trail among us through Southern Ohio, where every bill that Charley Browne had left was paid by Artemus Ward. Poor, genial, reckless Browne! I am glad I never saw him after he left Ohio, for the career by which he is to be remembered was then over, and the rest was painful.

In those days Richard Smith had only lately ceased to be Associated Press agent, and he still clung to the commercial and financial columns of *The Gazette*. He was the shrewdest, as well as the most indulgent of managers; but neither I nor any of his other wicked partners had then fully awaked to his extraordinary true-goodness. On the next block *The Commercial* was making interminable talk about its wonderful four-cylinder press. Potter was still active, but a young fellow named Halstead, who had for some time been "the scissors" of the establishment, was coming to the front. He had already learned one secret of making a good newspaper, for he was inventing special trains from Columbus or special dispatches from Xenia to enable him to get into *The Commercial* in time for the midnight editions, one day ahead of *The Gazette*, whole columns of clippings from the latest New-York papers. "Pap" Taylor had already secured for that grotesque production of those days, *The*

*Dollar Weekly Times*, a circulation of over a hundred thousand copies, and Starbuck was wisely administering the trust. Quaint, kindly old fellow! He didn't witch the world with noble editing; but I never think of him without gratitude, for he engaged me to write him one Columbus letter a column long, every day, for \$5 a week, when I was more than glad to get the job.

Bickham shone then as the red ribbon reporter of all the agricultural fairs. He was yet to serve an army apprenticeship before rising to the dignity and dollars of our Dayton Warwick. Nichols had rivals then in Springfield; he had not yet starved them all out. Plumb had just left my own old office in Xenia to start on the Kansas road, that has led him to the United States Senate.

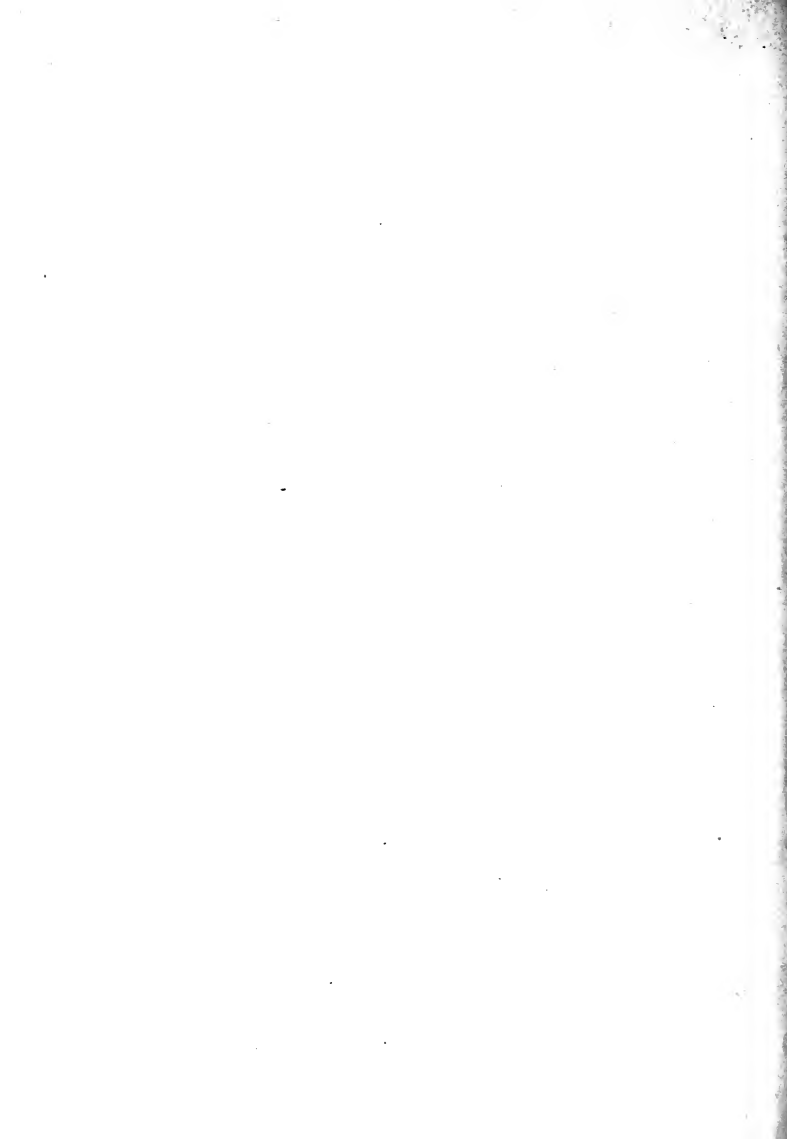
But a truce to these reminiscences—a sure sign that we are growing old. Let me only say how glad and proud I am to find a place kept for me among this younger generation of Ohio country editors. Young or old, we agree in this: we are all proud we are Ohioans, whether we live here or not—proud that we were born here, proud of Ohio's soldiers, proud of Ohio's statesmen, proud that she has held the White House for twelve years, and to believe that, with one party or another, she is to hold it for at least four more; proud of her wealth in great names and great resources; proudest of all of the high-spirited, generous people, the nameless masses, who make the noble State, the Gracious Mother of us all



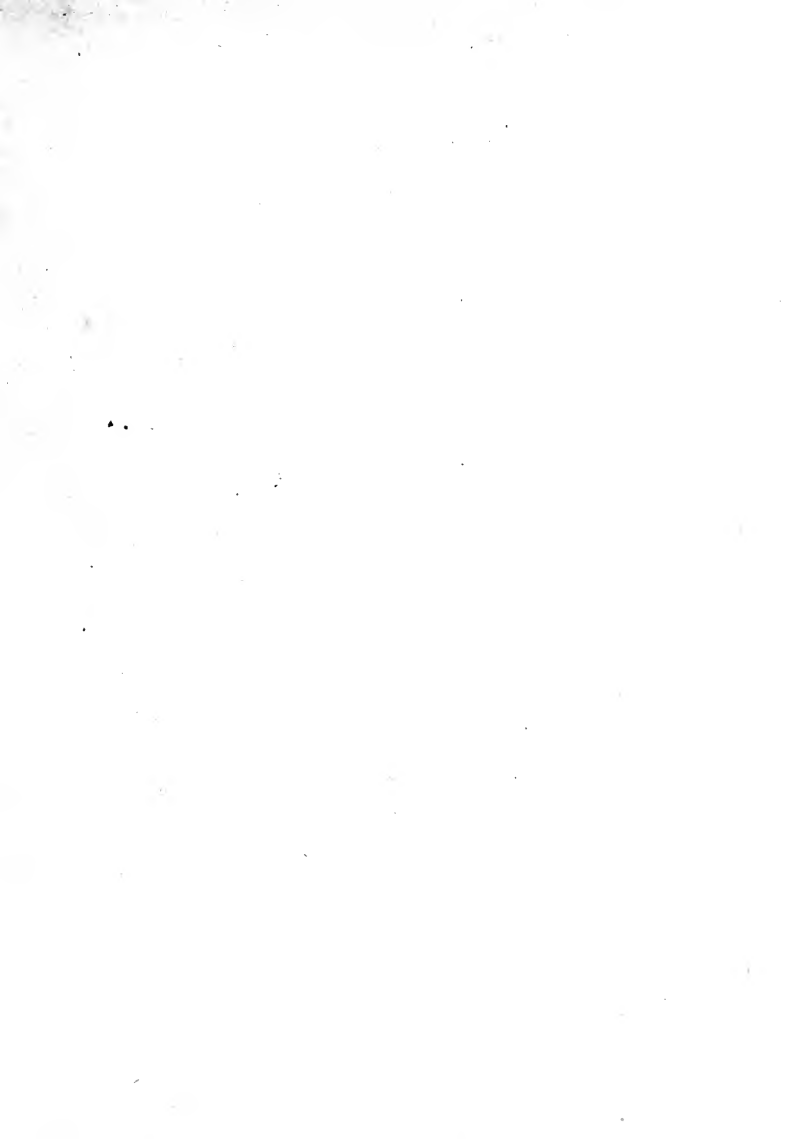












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